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C O N F I D E N T I A L KARACHI 000173

E.O. 12958: DECL: May 19, 2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: BALOCHISTAN: AALI BUGTI NAMED SARDAR OF THE  
BUGTI TRIBE

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

Classified by Stephen G. Fakan, Consul General, Reasons:  
1.4 b and d.

11. (SBU) Summary: After three years of a leadership vacuum, the Bugti tribe has a new leader. Aali Bugti, the grandson of the late Nawab Akber Bugti, returned to Dera Bugti after three years of exile and was named Sardar in a ceremony held May 19. His return and ascendancy to leadership of the tribe are controversial and may lead to increased fighting among clan factions of the Bugti tribe. End summary.

12. (SBU) Since the killing of Nawab Akber Bugti by the Pakistani army in 2006, the Bugti tribe has lacked a sardar (tribal chief). Based upon tribal tradition, the eldest surviving son assumes the role of sardar upon the death of the father. With Nawab Akber's eldest son dead, however, Aali Bugti is a legitimate claimant under tribal law to be sardar of the Bugtis. (Note: Nawab Akber Bugti had hoped another grandson Bramdagh Bugti, would succeed him, but Nawab Akber was killed before he could gain the support of the clan elders for his choice. End note.)

13. (SBU) Aali Bugti remained with his grandfather Nawab Akber Bugti until shortly before the leader's death. He then spent the next three years in exile and only returned to Dera Bugti on May 1 with the support of the GOP and the army. He was named Sardar at a tribal gathering on May 19, which was attended by only three out of five chiefs of the Bugti clans and minor members of the tribe. Conspicuously absent were two clan chiefs and members of the Nawab Akber's family, and although tradition stipulates attendance by all clan chiefs and members of the Nawab's family to legitimize the proceedings, the ceremony continued without them, albeit with some controversy.

14. (SBU) Traditionally, the proceedings called a dastarbandi - begin when a member of the Syed clan (who are reputed to be descendants of the prophet Ali) start the wrappings of a turban around the head of the designated successor. To signify their support for the new sardar, the wrapping of the turban is then completed by the other clan elders. However, Pir Suri Mir Hassan, the named representative of the Syed clan and who by tradition is also supposed to be present, was kidnapped on May 12, further casting doubt on the legitimacy of Aali's dastarbandi.

15. (SBU) Without Pir Suri available to begin the dastarbandi process, it is unlikely that Aali will be

viewed by all clans as a legitimate leader. His acceptance by the clans is further complicated by his apparent affiliations with the GOP, and particularly with the army. About half of the clans of the Bugti tribe publicly support Aali; they view him as the rightful leader, regardless of whether or not he is supported by GOP. Others are withholding their support to highlight their disaffection with GOP policies towards Balochistan.

¶6. (C) Jamil Akber Bugti, son of Nawab Akber Bugti and uncle of Aali, told post he will never support Aali because of his association with those forces that killed his father. Baloch nationalists describe Aali's return to Dera Bugti as a conspiracy against the Baloch and a plan by the GOP and army to create more fractures within the Bugti tribe. Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal, President of the Balochistan National Party Q Mengal (BNP-M) says the government is trying to foment a civil war in Balochistan. He believes Aali's presence in Sui will intensify disputes rather than lead to peace.

¶7. (C) Others view the arrival of Aali as a positive step. Rahat Malik, a businessman and political analyst, believes that neither the government nor the Bugti tribe alone can improve the situation in Dera Bugti. A tradeoff is needed in the area, and Malik believes Aali's presence will help promote compromise and reduce the risk of bloodshed. Naseer Ahmed Bugti, a journalist, believes Aali's return might be the spark of hope needed by people living in Dera Bugti. He went on to state, however, that without the presence of Pir Suri Mir Hassan, tribal code will not recognize the announcement of a new Sardar. Declaring Aali Bugti as a Sardar on May 19, without the formal ceremony, will be controversial.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: Opinions vary, but some Baloch believe the return of Aali to Dera Bugti is an effort by the GOP to regain some control in the region, and to provoke internal conflict within the already fractious Bugti tribe. Army efforts to organize groups of anti-Baloch nationalists to provide security for government installations further increase tensions between clans within the tribe. It remains to be seen how much influence Aali Bugti will wield and his controversial May 19 ascension to Sardar may leave him ineffective and unable to bring stability to Dera Bugti.

FAKAN